

INFO FOR NEW DOG ADOPTERS - -HEARTWORMS-



What you should know about Heartworms

Congratulations on your new pet! The shelter staff has worked very hard to ensure the health of your pet, but Heartworms can be a common condition in dogs adopted from shelters. That's because many of the pets who come into this shelter have never received vet checkups or regular heartworm prevention. Here is some information about this condition and how you can help your newly adopted dog recover and lead a long and healthy life!



Did you know?...

- Heartworms are a preventable but potentially fatal parasite that are transmitted by mosquitoes after they bite an infected animal. ALL pets are at risk for heartworms...even those who stay indoors or go outside only occasionally!



Heartworms are transmitted via mosquitoes. Heartworm infection can be costly to treat and potentially fatal.

*Graphic courtesy of the
American Heartworm Society*

- Young heartworms called microfilariae grow into infective larvae in the mosquito's system. Those larvae then get transmitted to other animals when the mosquitoes feed.

- It takes about six months for those infective larvae to mature into adult heartworms. During that time, the growing worms can damage your pet's blood vessels, making it harder for their heart and lungs to work effectively.

- Adult heartworms can live for more than 5 years in dogs and if worms of both sexes are present in your pet's body, they can mate and produce *even more* microfilariae...thus starting the cycle all over!

- Signs of advanced heartworm infection can include coughing, loss of appetite and difficulty breathing...but recently infected dogs may show *no* symptoms at all.

Can heartworms be prevented?

YES!!! Heartworms ARE preventable and all pets at Animal Care Services have been tested for this serious condition. There are several FDA approved preventatives for your pet and *it is vitally important your pet receive these monthly medications.*

Heartworm positive pets *adopted from ACS* will be treated at no cost to you. These pets **MUST** be placed on monthly preventative in order for the treatment to be successful. These preventatives can't kill adult heartworms nor will they prevent signs of heartworm infection if adult parasites are present. That's why it's important blood tests be performed every year to ensure your pet stays healthy and infection free!



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